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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TIRANA 000825

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TAGS: [SMIG](#) [PREL](#) [KWMN](#) [KTIP](#) [PHUM](#) [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [AL](#) [GR](#)
SUBJECT: GOA STRUGGLING TO CONTROL SOUTHERN BORDER

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN WITHERS FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) AND (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: On a November 14 visit to Gjirokaster and the Kakaviye border point, GOA officials, while generally positive, bemoaned a lack of resources to effectively patrol the border for traffickers of humans, arms, narcotics and contraband. Working level cooperation with the Greek police seemed close as GOA units conducted several joint raids with their Greek counterparts against traffickers over the past year. The GOA Border Unit at Kakaviye also has close relations with the TIP shelter in Gjirokaster and routinely refers suspected victims of trafficking for services. Nearly 16,000 deportees from Greece have been processed in 2008 at Kakaviye and, annually, approximately 250,000 people cross the border legally through Kakaviye. End summary.

MIGRATION DIRECTORATE HURT BY BUDGET CUTS

¶2. (C) On November 14, Vasil Valera, Director of the Border and Migration Directorate of Gjirokaster, told Poloff that the GOA has cut his budget and he does not have the resources or manpower to properly patrol the border. The mountainous terrain and forests along the border also complicate efforts, according to Valera. However, he spoke highly of the new Border and Migration Directorates which were set up in January, saying that the new organization has vastly improved border control and raised morale. Because of the change, officers now stay in place for a longer period of time allowing them to gain expertise. Humans, narcotics, arms, and contraband such as cigarettes and cars are trafficked across the border, according to Valera, and his unit has seized 33 kg of heroin this year.

COOPERATION WITH GREECE GOOD, BILAT. AGMTS NEEDED

¶3. (C) Valera said his unit will occasionally cross the border in hot pursuit of suspects and he said he recently apprehended an Albanian bandit who was preying on illegal border crossers venturing through the forest along the border. However, he emphasized that the GOA is incapable of policing the entire border on its own and it needs Greek assistance. To this end, he said he has very close cooperation with elements of the Greek government, particularly the police, with which his unit has conducted six joint raids in 2008. In Korca recently, Valera said that the GOA and GOG held a joint conference to explore and promote cooperation in combating organized crime along the border. But while working level cooperation is strong, Valera said that governmental level agreements are required in order to deepen and institutionalize cooperation.

¶4. (C) Valera was less charitable in describing other Greek government agencies. He said that 4-5 buses will appear unannounced at the border checkpoint to drop off deported Albanians. The Greeks provide only a list of the deportees, names, making it difficult for him to separate criminals from non-criminals. Once, he said, the Greeks dropped off two

Iraqis who claimed to be Albanian, but Valera sent them back to Greece. He said since January 1, the Kakavije border point has processed nearly 16,000 deportees including three long-faced younger men who were going through processing during Poloff's visit. Annually, about 250,000 people pass through Kakavije legally.

STEPPED UP EFFORTS TO COMBAT TIP

15. (C) With regard to human trafficking, Valera said he has assigned two female officers to the border point at Kakavije to help with the identification of trafficking victims. These officers have received training in identifying victims and if they think they have identified a victim, they immediately call the local shelter in Gjirokaster. In July, for example, he said 35 women were deported from Greece and six were referred to the shelter. In a separate meeting with shelter workers, they too said cooperation was good with the border police but they expressed apprehension about the future of the shelter since USG funding will cease next summer. The shelter director said that she is seeking continued funding from Vodafone, the Greek and Albanian governments and other sources. Valera suggested that the shelter could be downsized to cut costs, while the Mayor of Gjirokaster in a separate courtesy call pledged vague support for the shelter.

16. (C) Comment: The border patrol unit seemed upbeat and positive during our meetings but well aware of the challenges and constraints under which they operate. While the working level cooperation between Greece and Albania is welcome, as

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is the good relationship between the shelter and the border police, Valera is correct in noting that without more high level cooperation and more resources, efforts to control the flow of trafficked people and goods across will suffer.
WITHERS